

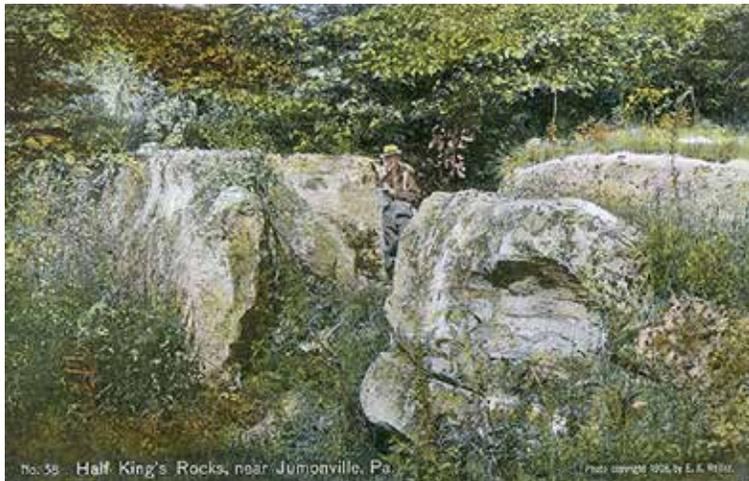


# B.R.P.A. Journal

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No. 38 - Half King's Rocks, near Jumonville, Pa.

*Half King Rocks, where Ensign Colon de Jumonville was killed during George Washington's first battle. John Kennedy Lacock fell from the cliffs while researching the battle. Lacock devoted decades of his life to his love of history and research, and he later died from complications from his injuries.*

## John Kennedy Lacock, the Braddock Road, and "Death" at Jumonville

by Walt Powell

This year's BRPA Seminar will continue to explore the role of local historian John Kennedy Lacock (1871-1933) in identifying the original Braddock Road trace, and the ongoing debate over the accuracy of his findings. We will explore new information presented by historian Norman Baker, who will provide commentary during our bus tour of the Braddock Road from Jumonville to Braddock on Friday—sharing his experiences as he has walked the route.

When Lacock undertook his efforts to document the Braddock Road in the first quarter of the 20th century, he made every effort to work from as many 18th century sources as were available, and to rely on the efforts of local historians, property owners, and his own experience walking the route from Cumberland to Braddock. He certainly had his share of uncertainty about sections of the route, such as the location of "Blunder Camp," where the expedition halted on July 7th, 1755. He noted in his study *The Braddock Road* (1914) that "the road seems to pass east of Long Run Church, and a few rods northwest of it crosses the Pittsburgh and Philadelphia turnpike. Here, in the neighborhood of Circleville and Stewartsville, the

army encamped again." (p. 34) But as historian Paul A.W. Wallace pointed out in an article in the January 1963 issue of the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, new information provided by the discovery of two maps made by Christopher Gist, and the recently published journals of Captain Robert Chalmers's *Batman* of the 48th Regiment of Foot and Lt. Daniel Disney of the 44th Regiment of Foot made it possible to "place the site more confidently."

Lacock's historical interests in Pennsylvania and the Ohio country were broad, but especially focused on the era of the French and Indian War, including the Forbes Campaign and George Washington's 1754 Campaign. As the Washington Bicentennial approached in 1932, Lacock became especially interested in clearly establishing the importance of the May 28, 1754 skirmish at Jumonville Glen, for recent efforts to reconstruct Fort Necessity and open it as a park had, in Lacock's view, overlooked the fact that Washington's first battle was at Jumonville. Taking matters into his own hands, Lacock purchased nearly four acres of a 141 acre farm belonging to German immigrant Samuel Roesnick to preserve that portion that included "Washington's Rocks" and the presumed site of Ensign Joseph Coulon de Jumonville's grave. There, on August 19, 1932, a five ton boulder with attached bronze tablet was dedicated, with a keynote address by Dr. Albert Bushnell Hart, historian of the United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission, and Professor Emeritus in Government at Harvard University. Prior to the ceremony, access to the site had been made possible by the clearing of underbrush all the way to "Half King's Rock" and the Summit Hotel on Route 40 by the Phalanx Fraternity of the Connellsville Y.M.C.A, with whom Lacock was affiliated.

For several summers, Lacock had left his home in Boston to lodge either at the Good Samaritan Home at Dunbar's Camp (Jumonville) or at the "Stone House" along Route 40. Tragically, his passion for walking over the grounds and verifying the site of Jumonville Glen was ultimately his undoing, for he fell over a log and injured his left knee in July 1932—an injury that subsequently got worse and led to his confinement at the Connellsville State Hospital, where he died on March 8, 1933. In a eulogy published in the *Connellsville Daily Courier*, Lacock's friend and mentor Dr. Albert Bushnell Hart observed that "the people of Southwestern Pennsylvania are under a greater obligation than any. . . person, for the knowledge they may have of George Washington and his association with the history of this section, especially Fayette County." Today, more than a century after his first efforts to document Jumonville, we can be grateful for his commitment to preservation and acknowledge his legacy.

# A Legacy of Authenticity

*Fort Ligonier executive director expanded museum's offerings during 30 years*

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Thursday, July 07, 2011  
By Mary Thomas, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

When Martin West retired Friday after three decades at the helm of Fort Ligonier, he left a legacy that includes a structure so historically authentic that George Washington would feel at home, should he return.

By expanding collections and developing new exhibitions in the adjacent Fort Ligonier Museum, Mr. West also ensured that the story of the fort would be vividly brought to life for succeeding generations.

Now the site attracts local visitors, tourists from afar and scholars of the French and Indian War from all over. The Seven Years' War raged throughout Europe, Africa, India, the Philippines and the Americas in the mid 18th-century, and Winston Churchill later referred to it as the first world war. What we call the French and Indian War was the American component.

"All of that history is Martin West's playground," Charles A. Fagan III said. "He is one of the go-to people on that period."

The Fort Ligonier that exists today is "a totally accurate reconstruction," said Mr. Fagan, a member of the Fort Ligonier board and past president who has known Mr. West since he arrived at the fort in 1981.

"The fort is built as it was from the original plans on the original site. When you stand at the fort, you see it as George Washington saw it. That is a moving part of the experience," Mr. Fagan said.

Work on the 18th century British fort began in the early 1950s, Mr. Fagan said, but after Mr. West's arrival, it picked up speed. "He was responsible for the superintending of that exterior reconstruction, a major accomplishment."

"Another major accomplishment was an expansion of exhibitions within the museum," Mr. Fagan said.

"The World Ablaze' is the finest totally focused exhibition on the Seven Years' War that perhaps exists anywhere in the world. Martin West conceived it and worked on it throughout. All of the objects are totally authentic. It took 10 to 15 years to put together. That's an immense accomplishment, an immense contribution, an immense gift of his talents."

Approximately 300 new objects were acquired for the exhibition, which was launched in the summer of 2008. It includes a focus area on each protagonist.

"The exhibit puts the war in context," Mr. West said at the time of its opening. "It was the most decisive war of the 18th century, and the exhibit explains its great significance.



**Martin West**

We believe it to be the only one in the world on this subject that interprets every theater of the war with original objects."

Other exhibits were upgraded during Mr. West's tenure. He also began a "small fine arts gallery, mostly to show children what the people being talked about looked like," Mr. Fagan said. Among the dozen original oil portraits are those of King George III, Sir John Ligonier and George Washington painted by pre-eminent American portraitist Rembrandt Peale.

Mr. West, a graduate of Miami University of Ohio, earned a Master of Arts degree in history from Wright State University. He served on the national advisory board for the French and Indian War 250th anniversary celebration, the George Washington Advisory Council of Scholars at Mount Vernon, the Fort Duquesne Advisory Commission and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission. He was a government witness in 1991 during a hearing on a bill to expand Fort Necessity National Battlefield in Fayette County at the House of Representatives.

He has authored numerous publications on the period. Mr. West was awarded the Pennsylvania Meritorious Service Medal by the Pennsylvania National Guard for Preservation of Early Commonwealth History.

Annie Urban, who was director of marketing and development of Fort Ligonier, has been appointed interim director of operations and development. "I am not a historian but am caring for the day-to-day operations [of Fort Ligonier]," Ms. Urban said.

Prior to joining the fort's staff in 2008, Ms. Urban said she attended the opening of "The World Ablaze" and listened to Martin West give tours to the hundreds who attended. "The exhibit is truly his legacy to Fort Ligonier," she said. "Martin's extensive knowledge of 18th century history, coupled with his passion for Fort Ligonier, is unparalleled. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with him and learn more about the French and Indian War and the history of my hometown of Ligonier."

***Special thanks are due to the Fayette County Community Foundation for their past and continuing support of the History Seminar.***